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My Way to the NSDAP

ENTRY INTO WRITING CONTEST FOR NSDAP PARTY MEMBERS



by Bernhard Horstmann

I was born in Bottrop on February 12, 1883, the son of miner Joseph Horstmann and his wife Maria, née Görtz. I attended elementary school in my home town from the age of 6 to 14. After leaving school, I also chose to become a miner in order to help my parents, who had 9 children to feed, by earning some money.

Under the existing social conditions, I came to the realization very early on — especially as my mother died when I was only 16 years old — that the struggle for daily bread can often be quite bitter and that, in particular, the intellectual classes' disregard for their fellow citizens struggling for their existence through the hardest work and deprivation severely impaired their enjoyment of life. This realization gave me the will to contribute with my modest young strength to the elimination of the often quite ignoble and asocial conditions. My efforts were made easier by my workmates' understanding and empathy for my views and my inner experience at the beginning of my physical and mental

development. The loyalty and camaraderie that my colleagues showed me made me happy and glad and I was proud to be one of them. This feeling of solidarity dominated me more and more in the years that followed. The work was hard and difficult; the unspeakably dangerous, but also fascinating profession of the miner demanded complete commitment. 800 metres below ground, in the darkness of the tunnels and galleries, surrounded by death every second, cut off from the light of the sun, the miner stood firmly by my side in the coal seam to dig the black diamonds, without which the economic life of the world would simply be unthinkable today. Here I found the deepest humility before Almighty God happily united with the strictest fulfillment of duty and willingness to make sacrifices. The silent and passionate dedication to the difficult job had an uplifting effect. **"Fearless and faithful" was the motto under which the work was carried out, regardless of the danger.**

In order to equip myself more and more with the intellectual tools to be a true and full-fledged workmate and a helper to my fellow workers in their efforts to gain recognition for their profession, I attended the Bergvorschule in Bottrop from Easter 1902 to October 1903. My continued attendance was interrupted by my call-up for military service on October 14, 1902. I remained a soldier, married in 1911 and continued to serve in the army until 1919.

The revolution that broke out in 1918 was a crime not only against the workers, but against the people as a whole, however convincingly the leaders of the workers' revolt at the time spoke out in its favour. Where was peace, freedom and bread? — illusions that were presented to the blind masses to the dark business of the so-called folk tribunes in order to keep them in line. There is no need to emphasize that this criminal and violently-induced development struck every true and honest German in the face. Were these to be the results, the fruits of my 16 years of service in war and peace? Was this that for which Germany's youthful bloom had been mowed down in hundreds of battles? It almost seemed so — the betrayal of the folk and the fatherland was celebrated in those days in veritable orgies, everything that was still inspired and uplifted by the glorious deeds of our old army was reviled, despised, and dragged into the mud of the gutter. Here my inner self rebelled against so much shame and infamy. My soldier's honor was dragged into the dirt by these home warriors, shallow pacifists puffed themselves up and talked the talk. Men without backbone and the vile excrescence of the opportunists triumphed over the decent and honest part of the population. "The soldiers of the German army have fallen on the field of dishonour." A lecturing Prof. Gumbel was allowed to make this statement without fear of being torn to atoms. This homogeneous caste deliberately aimed to systematically suffocate any sense of honor, the greatest and

most beautiful thing a person or a nation can possess. Sadly, these poisons of the folk have succeeded only too well in contaminating a large proportion of perfectly respectable fellow citizens with words and writing of the worst kind. In 1919 I therefore joined the Deutschen Volkspartei as a place of comradeship alongside the regimental association, whose national program gave me a small hope of improving the undeserved situation under the circumstances of the time.

People were grasping at any straw to counter the disgrace and believe in the nation's recovery. But as with all parties in the first post-war period, they promised a lot and delivered nothing. The liberalist view of those days remained definitive for all of them. I left in 1920 after about a year of membership. It almost seemed as if the bearers of the wild, irrepressible power of the old army were tired and indifferent to the unfortunate events of those days. No one had the courage to act.

However, there was also no lack of modest but serious attempts to rally the nationally-minded men to the believe in their inexhaustible strength and thus make a start towards recovery. I mention here only the German-Socialist Party (Deutsch-Soziale Partei) and the German-Volkish Freedom Movement (Deutsch-Völkische Freiheitsbewegung) under the leadership of Richard Kunze and Reinhold Wulle. Inspired by the best of intentions, these organizations lacked the all-embracing and rousing idea.

Only the NSDAP, with its unique and unparalleled vigour, succeeded under Hitler's brilliant leadership in breaking the rigidity in the hearts of Germans with nationalist and socialist sentiments. The avalanche swelled more and more violently, there was no stopping it despite persecution, terror, and murder. I and many of my fellow Germans breathed a sigh of relief. At last, the tribunes, fattened on the misery of the folk, would have to show their asses. They would have to fight relentlessly.

There was therefore only one choice for a good and honor-loving German, and that could only be the Führer. The helpless red government, incapable of truly great deeds, alerted to the growth of the NSDAP, now summarily banned civil servants from becoming members of Hitler's freedom movement and mercilessly put such civil servants, who wanted nothing more than to establish and preserve Germany's national honor, out on the streets.

But now it also became apparent that with the suppression, the counter-pressure was also growing and the glorious idea of our Führer was spreading ever further. Despite the existing ban and the consequences of disregarding it, I joined the NSDAP in

February 1932 because I saw it as the only way to save our German people. My view was reinforced by the behaviour of the Berlin police chief, who managed to officially certify that my 18-year-old son Herbert was engaged in anti-constitutional activities. And this crime, which was to be punished by a Red authority, consisted merely in the fact that my son had been a student representative in the Hitler Youth since 1928 and an S.A. man since March 1931, with my knowledge and consent. That was enough for the gentleman to issue a so-called "certificate of conduct" in 1930 to prevent my son from enlisting in the Wehrmacht and thus fulfilling his life's ambition. The rotten democracy worked with such petty, spiteful, and evil means, not realizing how the ground was sinking beneath its feet.

Now I had taken the decisive step. As a long-serving old soldier in the old army, I had joined the army of Adolf Hitler's political soldiers. I now began a sustained campaign of publicity and education about the aims of the NSDAP among my friends and relatives and in the services. **Beautiful and noble comradeship**, which I was allowed to cultivate during my long years in the military, **found the most beautiful resurrection in the fighting ranks of the NSDAP. A good, tested, and tough group of people came together here in fervent love for the folk and the fatherland, tenacious and dogged in the implementation of a revolutionary and pure idea, unbending in their belief in Germany's future.**

The battle for the soul of the German people was not in vain. **Today, under the all-surpassing greatness of our People's Chancellor Adolf Hitler, the entire German people is united, united in an indissoluble community of destiny, for which comradeship and loyalty stand as the highest law alongside honor and duty.**

To summarize, I can say that the NSDAP's principle of "the common good before self-interest" has always found the greatest understanding among the working classes of the population. And **once familiarized with the pure idea of the Führer, National Socialism is not just lip service in these circles, but a beautiful "inner experience."**

Today I am happy about the increasing inner transformation of the German people and it is a satisfaction for me to have made a modest contribution to the successes achieved through my activity in the movement.

Heil Hitler!

Bernhard Horstmann, municipal official